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Interviewee:	Professor Scott Bates
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Interviewer:	David Cline
Videographer:	John Bishop
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David Cline: So, we will—we'll start here, and what I'll do is just a very brief introduction.

Scott Bates: Okay.

David Cline: We call it the marker. We let the recording know, basically, where we are and what we're doing.

Scott Bates: Sure.

David Cline: And then we'll start talking.

Scott Bates: Okay. I'll go to the bathroom.

David Cline: And like I said, just a conversation. Anytime you want to take a break, just let us know. We can stop anytime.

Scott Bates: Okay. Take a pit stop.

David Cline: Exactly.

Scott Bates: Okay.

David Cline: Yep. [Laughs]

John Bishop: Okay, we're rolling.

David Cline: Okay. So, today, I believe is the twenty-first. Am I right about that? Of June?

John Bishop: Let me get out my cellphone and see.

David Cline: [Laughs]

Scott Bates: It's the first of July.

David Cline: No, I think—

John Bishop: No, that's—

David Cline: No, we're not quite there.

John Bishop: I have June twenty-first.

David Cline: Okay. So, today is Friday, the twenty-first of June, 2013. Speaking is David Cline from the History Department at Virginia Tech, also working with the Southern Oral History Program [at UNC-Chapel Hill]. Behind the camera today we have John Bishop from UCLA and—

John Bishop: Media Generation.

David Cline: Media Generation. And today we have the absolute pleasure of speaking with Professor Scott Bates. And we're in his lovely home in Sewanee, Tennessee, today. And, if you could just introduce yourself, that would be wonderful.

Scott Bates: Okay. Well, I'm from Chicago, Evanston, actually, across from Lake Michigan. And went into the Army from my college, was drafted in 1942, and went straight to Camp Grant.

DC: Um-hmm. When were you born?

SB: I was born in 1923.

DC: 1923 in Illinois?

SB: Um-hmm. And my whole family is from Chicago. And my great-uncle was Lincoln's best friend. He's not his best-known friend. They just brought a book out on him. He was from New England, actually, and he went west to Chicago. He was a farm boy, went west and became a Chicago lawyer. And the rest of my family is Chicago lawyer history, up until Clarence Darrow, who replaced my grandfather.

DC: [Laughs] Very interesting.

SB: But my great-uncle was a fellow from—his name was Swett, Leonard Swett, and a book has just come out about him. And he went west to Chicago, as they said in those days. He became a lawyer, and the rest is my history, basically, a bunch of Chicago lawyers, and ended up in Northwestern, because Evanston was dry.

DC: Right.

SB: And they were dry Englishmen before they were in Maine. And [clears throat] so, I grew up in a dry town and was delighted to find out that I came to a dry county, which was running with good moonshine.

DC: [Laughs] Of course!

SB: Everyplace! The best moonshine that ever ended up in Chicago in the trucks of Al Capone. And so, everybody knew Al Capone. If you want to go to Al Capone restaurant, it's in Monteagle, Tennessee, right down the road from here. And it's about the best food in town and has some of the best liquor in town. But the best liquor in the mountain, and perhaps the whole

range here, came from this road and this woods. The stills were here. So, anytime any police wanted good liquor to drink, they raided a still, and drank liquor for the next month or so.

DC: Fantastic.

SB: And so, this is well-known for its liquor, and I'll give you a shot before you leave.

DC: [Laughs]

SB: And it's potent, let me tell you! [Laughs]

DC: Well, let me ask you if you could just sort of sketch the journey that ended with you coming here to Sewanee.

SB: Okay, yeah.

DC: So, you talked about growing up in Chicago, a little bit about where you went to school.

SB: Okay.

DC: And then, I guess, were you drafted? I don't know if you were drafted into the military.

SB: Yeah. I went to Carleton College, because it was relatively cheap, all-boys school, and they had no fraternities. And I lived across the street from Northwestern University, which was a drunken university at that time, and was glad to leave it. And so, I was happy to be at a sober university. But I was also happy to get my first job after the war.

I was drafted in 1942 and sent to England, to France to D-Day and as a French interpreter. Because I had spent the interim at the University of Chicago studying French for the Army, ASTP program [probably the Army Specialized Training Program]. [0:05:00] And studied that for a year, sent to Britain, which was the horniest island I've ever run into.

DC: [Laughs]

SB: Everybody was sleeping with their landlady, you know, [in the building]. And the landlords kind of were working in the factories, so they didn't care much. And they were getting ready for D-Day. We all knew D-Day was coming up. So, we landed on the beach at Omaha Beach and our land—our beach—what did they call them, beach driver? You know, land driver? Land rover? What'd they call them?

DC: Yes.

SB: Anyway, they landed in the middle of a firestorm. [Laughs] They didn't have air cover, but they had night cover. I mean, they had air cover at night, but no—Americans didn't have air cover at all. And so, they blasted the hell out of us, and we were lying on the beach. And I woke up in the hospital last week on the sand on Utah Beach, [laughs] with sand in my hair. I could feel it, you know.

DC: You could feel it when you woke up?

SB: When I woke up, yeah, and I was right there! It was [6:13]. And so, we were, as soon as Patton broke through, we headed down to Saint Lô on the—halfway down to Avranches, which was our ultimate goal. We were going to be in the military government of Avranches, which was called at that time, the—uh, damn the—it was Patton's Third Army, and it was going like a house afire, but they held up at Saint Lô. So, they had sent over thirteen hundred bombers, big bombers, and bombed the hell out of Saint Lô for half a day and reduced it to rubble, nothing but rubble. There's a little museum and chapel there now. And then, when we broke through there, after about three weeks, we headed straight down to Avranches, which was our rendezvous with Bradley's army, and went in with Patton's army into Brittany.

But Avranches was our goal, and it was there that I became a French interpreter and did French interpreting for the rest of the war, until we got to Germany, that is. And that was for a year before we made the breakthrough in Germany, the Battle of the Bulge and all that.

DC: Right.

SB: And we were kept out of the Battle of the Bulge, because we were French interpreters and we were expected to run Germany. We were going to be the people who ran Germany. And so, we were saved.

At Romilly, France, Romilly-sur-Seine, is where I really ran into the black troops. They were stationed there for the winter before the Battle of the Bulge. And they were all sent into the Battle of the Bulge, and everybody was sent into the Battle of the Bulge except us, because Eisenhower depended on us to run Germany. And so, we kept out there for a year, supervising the whorehouses in France. And that's where [laughs] I ran into a lot of black troops, because they were separated. It was separate but equal and—supposedly equal.

DC: Supposedly equal.

SB: It was more than equal, actually, because they had nine whorehouses, but they were not supervised. They were not legal. And we had charge of the legal whorehouse, and so we had two whores. They had nine whorehouses and all the whores they wanted, the black troops had. They were secret, and there's never been a tale told about them. But they, you know, had huge trade.

DC: But those wouldn't have been inspected, though, either.

SB: No, they were not inspected.

DC: So, that would have been more dangerous, obviously, for them.

SB: Yeah. So, I have never heard about the rage, must have been, epidemic of syphilis among black troops at that time. And gonorrhea and everything else. Because we kept the—our white guys down to the two black whores at the whorehouse.

DC: Oh, and they were black?

SB: No, they were white.

DC: Oh, white whores?

SB: Yeah, white whores, yeah. And they were businesswomen. I mean, they ran town, practically, because they had long lines waiting for those two white gals, you know. Became millionaires right off the bat. And so, they must be legendary, and someday their story will be written up.

But it was, of course, another Paris, what happened in Paris. And there, we went to one of the whorehouses, because they were full of white, black, everybody, and French soldiers, and white British soldiers, [0:10:00] and gosh, everybody. Spanish soldiers, you name it—I mean, Spanish immigré soldiers, in any case, because of Franco's time, you know.

But in any case, that was interesting, because we walked—we asked the people where—we went in for a load of tiles, because the tiles had been blown off all the roofs in the center of Avranches, which was a key point between Brittany and Normandy, and that's where our station was. And so, we were assigned Avranches, and we thought we were just going to be there for a week while Patton's army went through. But they held up at Brest.

We watched Saint Lô, Saint Milo burn across the bay. And what was that out in the middle of the bay, but this beautiful fairy castle. It turned out to be the Mont Saint-Michel. [Laughs] I didn't know it was there. Never heard of it, you know. What was that fairy castle doing in the middle of the bay, [laughs] you know?

DC: Yeah.

SB: And so, we stayed in Avranches for three weeks, while Hitler did a counterattack, which has not been written up like D-Day, but it was about like D-Day, you know. And so, we were out in the middle of it. So, that was the worst part. That was even worse than D-Day for us, lying on the beach, and we were bombed the *shit* out of, frankly. It was just incredible, and everything Hitler could throw at us and his generals could throw at us. They were against it. They knew they'd never break through Patton's army to the sea, and they never got to the sea. They never got to Mont Saint-Michel. But they used Mont Saint-Michel as a target site for their bombing.

DC: I would imagine, sure.

SB: They started the dive bombing on us. And that was the worst part of the war. That was worse than D-Day, actually, just focusing on this little town, you know, and blasting the hell out of us. So, we got out of town and went to a convent on the edge of town and stayed in this convent in the outhouse on the back of the house of the convent. A sergeant, a staff sergeant, and he brought along a little French gal, who had been—had her head shaved because she had been sleeping with Germans. And so, we stayed with her, the French gal, and the sergeant and two PFCs and me, who was the French interpreter. I was the only one that spoke French, and so, [laughs] I was necessary to the bunch.

DC: Right.

SB: And so, we stayed there, because they didn't bomb the convent. One thing they were after was the little bridge across the little river there below Avranches, where the whole Patton's army was going across, [laughs] guided by five MPs and a couple of ack-acks. And, boy, did they get it, and no protection, really. No cover, you know. And so, we were under the same

bombing, meaning the town right next to it. And that was the worst bombing. That was even worse than D-Day. But that tale's not been told.

DC: Let me ask you about—

JB: [13:10]

SB: That's called the Battle of Falaise, Falaise Gap.

JB: Falaise Gap.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: We're back on.

SB: By night bombing.

DC: Let me ask you about race again. So, you mentioned the interactions that you had, obviously, with the black troops, and there were probably other interactions that you had there.

SB: Yeah.

DC: What about growing—were these your first interactions with black folks?

SB: Yeah.

DC: Or had you had some growing up in Chicago?

SB: No, they positioned them in the same little town, Romilly-sur-Seine, up on the top of the Seine, where the Seine begins. We had to cross the river to go to the whorehouse. But the whorehouse was strictly for whites. And the black troops found their own whorehouses, built their own houses, and they had about—because they got into fights with the white troops immediately if they went to the white whorehouse. The moment they arrived—they were separated, of course—they were at that white whorehouse, and immediately the fights started with white Southern troops and, of course, white Southern officers. They put Southern officers, and black troops and white troops. So, we had to separate them.

And so, the black troops were relegated to the whores in the town, of which there were hundreds on the sidewalks. But they were not supervised. They were not legal. And the white whores, two white whores, were legal. So, we directed the white troops to the white whorehouses and the two white whores, and the black troops to the—there must have been twenty or thirty whores. They were white whores, but they were in the black whorehouses, [0:15:00] supervised by blacks.

So, I walked MP with one black, who was a sophomore at Lincoln College in Pennsylvania and was very erudite, and we talked English literature, and a third white MP, who was a Virginian and who couldn't talk to us, because we were talking literature, and he couldn't talk literature. He could talk four-letter words, [laughs] but that's about all. And so, he sat—when we went into a bar and they gave us free drinks, our MPs, and sat us down at tables, he'd sit at a different table from us two. We were both English majors, and so we'd talk seventeenth century English literature while he'd cuss away. He couldn't talk French, either. And this black guy could talk French, and I could talk French, too, so we ran the show, really.

DC: [Laughs]

SB: And so, we didn't arrest anybody. And nobody arrested anybody. Everybody slept around, you know. And so, the blacks all got syphilis, and the whites did not. Or gonorrhea or whatever they had, mostly gonorrhea.

DC: Now, had you gone to school with black folks growing up?

SB: Yeah, at Evanston Township High School. It was one of the best high schools, and it was twenty percent black. It was still pretty socially segregated, but still I knew some black people. I had grown up with blacks. And I had read with horror the *Time* articles about the black

riots, anti-black riots in Detroit, at that time. And I had grown up with blacks, and pretty much at school and everything, in Evanston, Illinois, a dry town.

And when my family had come from Maine and England, and so they were kind of dry people. And so, that was alright, but I used to go down to Howard Street, which was on the edge of Chicago, to have drinks. And everybody else in Evanston did, too. And, of course, Northwestern was right across the street, and Northwestern was the drunkenest place in the whole area. [Laughs] And so, that I grew up with; it was drunks across the street, white—I mean, blacks in high school, and the drunkenest place in town, Howard Street between Chicago and Evanston. Well, so I was used to that.

And so, when I got my first job after the war—well, I went back to Carleton College and did very well in Carleton College, because I'd had twelve months at the University of Chicago, learning French to become a French interpreter. And so, I got my first job at Sewanee, Tennessee. And they were looking for a job. It was hard to get jobs at that time, the same thing as now. And so, I got a one-year job in the French department in Sewanee, Tennessee, a boys school in the south of America, in northern Tennessee.

DC: Had you ever been to the South before?

SB: Yeah, one time, in Orangeburg, when I was a kid, for my health. And got to know Southerners, but I never saw a black in Orangeburg, South Carolina, not a one black. You didn't have black maids. You ate at boarding schools. Didn't have cabins, or roadhouses, or anything like that. So, you ate around a big table, you know, and all the food on the table. And everybody ate there, but all white, and maybe a black servant with white hair, an old black servant or something like that. And stayed there a couple of months, and that was my one experience with the South.

And then, my experience with blacks was in the Army and in Evanston, Illinois. We did have a black maid in Evanston, Illinois, because in Evanston, the blacks would arrive from Chicago every morning on the L, and the whites would go *into* Chicago for their jobs. And we never saw a gangster, and this was in the twenties when I was growing up.

So, in any case, ended up in Sewanee, Tennessee, a little town of four hundred—a little college of four hundred male students.

DC: And the year?

SB: And the year was 1954, after I got out of—I got sixteen years of G.I. Bill and got my Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin, between that time—that's where I—and went back to Carleton for a year and went to the University of Chicago, went to the University of Wisconsin to get my Ph.D., and then, from there I got my first job at Sewanee, Tennessee. [0:20:00]

And so, that's how I ended up at Sewanee, Tennessee. And that was no blacks, no women, boys' college, Episcopal college, and was hired for one semester for there. Well, they saw I spoke good French, and so they hired me for lifetime [laughs], actually, it turned out. And I'm here, still here in Sewanee, Tennessee.

It turned out I had my work to do on the board of directors, trustees, actually, at Sewanee. We're an all-boys' school, all-Episcopal school, and I was brought up an atheist Congregationalist, basically. And so, did do my best job to convert the school, not only from—well, it turned out that most of the faculty was Unitarian, really, either Episcopal or Unitarian. And the student body was about ninety percent Episcopalian, and about ninety percent segregationist, so no blacks.

But there was the Episcopal Church, which had made a stance being—at desegregating. And it was mostly run by the trustees, who were Episcopal priests, half of them. And so, there

was a big battle there until 1943, when the whole white trustees, or the white faculty, walked out of Sewanee, Tennessee, and the University of the South it was known as, and took in what they thought were Southerners for faculty, faculty trustees, about ninety faculty—well, maybe sixty at that time. And so, we did our best to help them desegregate.

And we brought in—we desegregated because the black seminaries, Episcopal seminaries, throughout the South were closing. And they had to send those black Episcopal would-be priests to someplace, so they sent them to white seminaries, including the one across the street from me in Evanston, Illinois, Seabury-Western, which was a conservative one, and across the street from the Methodist seminary, which was—now, that was—which was Seabury-Western? That was Garrett Bib.

DC: Garrett Bib, yeah.

SB: Yeah, Garrett Bib, where Rosemary Ruether still works. Of course, she's a Catholic. In any case, they were very liberal, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the pacifist organization, had its headquarters there in Evanston. It was a dry town right by the Lake Michigan, which is why we have a lake next to us right here on top of a mountain. This is my ideal [laughs] to have a lake on top of a mountain, you know, in the middle of a pine forest. And so, we settled here and have been here ever since.

DC: Now, had you had any interaction with the Fellowship of Reconciliation?

SB: Yeah, I joined in Chicago and joined the Chicago chapter.

DC: And what kind of work were they doing?

SB: They were doing anti-Vietnam War work by that time, starting anti-Vietnam War work.

DC: Antiwar work.

SB: Yeah, antiwar work. And the Fellowship of Reconciliation headquarters was in Chicago, so I went down from Evanston every Saturday to go to their meetings. And ran into John Swomley, the great John Swomley, the great theologian, the pacifist theologian of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, he came there from out of Kansas to meet with us. And so, the Fellowship of Reconciliation played a large role. But it was, of course, Christian. And I wanted something that was non-Christian, so I joined the—I left the Fellowship of Reconciliation for the War Resisters League, which had its headquarters down in Greenwich Village, and where John Mc—uh, John Mc—he has a radio—he has a—what do they call them—a station—you know, a blog. And every day you can get him. And you can contact, if you want a contact with all war resister action going on in America today—

DC: Interesting. Still?

SB: He gets about ten—what do they call it—blogs a day, and they're all on [0:25:00] Google.

DC: Yeah.

SB: You can Google John Swomley.

DC: Yeah.

SB: Not John Swomley. John McKinnon. Do you know that name?

DC: No.

SB: Yeah, he's kind of elder statesman to the War Resisters League.

DC: To the War Resisters, yeah.

SB: And he's in touch with all the socialist action in America now.

DC: Okay.

SB: And the antiwar movement, and all the antiwar movement in Egypt and everyplace.

DC: So, you had this connection to the Fellowship of Reconciliation, which was interested in racial reconciliation?

SB: Oh, yeah, very much so.

DC: You know, before you came to this area, to Sewanee.

SB: Yeah. And then, I got a call. Once I got this job down here, I got a call from Bertrand Rus—not Bertrand—Bernard, uh—excuse my lack of memory now. Um, Ruskin.

DC: Bayard Rustin?

SB: Bayard Rustin!

DC: Yeah.

SB: I got a call from him, long distance, in my office at Sewanee, saying, "We hear you collect antiwar poetry," which I'd been doing since I was in high school. And, "Do you still have that collection?" And I said, "Yeah. I'm still doing it, and I'm doing it for the War Resisters League now, and I've got a column in—" I had a couple of poems in their periodical, and the Fellowship, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and joined the War Resisters League, and now, I had a lot of poetry, of antiwar poetry.

He said, "Well, can we use your collection of antiwar poetry?" And I said, "Sure, of course." And they said, "Well, we put out a calendar every year, a War Resisters League calendar, and we'd like it for—poetry, antiwar poetry. So, I sent him all my antiwar poetry for the next—gosh, antiwar poetry from—the first one was 1966. It's all there, 1966 to—they just stopped a couple of years ago, in 1986, I think it was. And they had a poem in every antiwar calendar. So, I got a collection. They published that collection in *Poems of War Resistance*.

DC: Yeah.

SB: We sold thirteen thousand copies—[laughs]

DC: That was your book?

SB: My book, during the Vietnam War.

DC: Yeah.

SB: They were preaching it [laughs] from every pacifist pulpit in America, and it was great, you know. "I just read your book of poetry," calling from all over the country, you know.

DC: Right. That's wonderful, yeah.

SB: And to have it in my library and everything. And they're teaching it in one of my courses down here, and so forth. And so, that became famous. It's right over there. And they had the great artist from Vermont, uh, do the drawings and etchings and everything for it. They sold it all over at bookstores—liberal bookstores all over the country.

DC: Yeah, yeah. That's exciting.

SB: And so, I'm still using it. I put out a poem a week here on all liberal causes, of course, in our local newspaper.

DC: In the local newspaper here in Sewanee?

SB: Yes, which was typed and published by my wife for the first eighteen years, and then taken over by the *Sewanee Mountain Messenger*, which is coming out, and you can pick it up when you eat lunch, in your case, on your way home.

DC: Right, right.

SB: The *Sewanee Mountain* will always have a poem in it.

DC: Okay, that's wonderful.

SB: Relating to what's going on, the war or the—I try to keep it fairly calm, you know, but do good, funny poetry that is related to the antiwar stuff and Memorial Day and things like

that. The Fourth of July—I also have Fourth of July poetry, which is an Armistice poem usually. [Laughs]

DC: [Laughs]

SB: And so forth. And so, that's read by everybody. It's free. It's handed out. And so, everybody reads the—first the *Sewanee Siren*, it was called, the *Sewanee Siren* because that's our fire alarm—and the *Sewanee Mountain Messenger* now. You can pick up on any counter around, grocery counter and all that. And it will always have a poem in it.

DC: Great.

SB: So, I've been writing poems, not my poems, but poems that I pick up, antiwar poems or poems that deal with the Fourth of July, Longfellow, or whatever. You know, poems that are not on copyright, but they're printed. It's a handout, so nobody's after me for copyright. So, I get away for everything!

DC: Yeah. [Laughs] [0:30:00]

SB: [Laughs] I have a complete collection over there.

DC: Well, let me ask you two questions. [Speaking to JB] Do you want to stop for a second?

[Recording stops and then resumes]

DC: Save these files, these digital files.

SB: I understand.

JB: Okay.

DC: We're back on.

JB: We're ready to go.

DC: So, two related questions. And one, I guess, is: Did you find people of like mind at Sewanee?

SB: [Sighs]

DC: And the other question is: Or in the greater community?

SB: Not the greater community.

DC: And that's sort of a segue to talking about Highlander.

SB: It's a liberal arts school, and so they accept a lot of *New Yorker* poems and upper class poems and liberal poems from various magazines, especially *In These Times* from Chicago and *Progressive* Magazine and stuff like that, and in-between stuff, a lot of stuff from American literature, modern American literature, ancient American literature. It's a religious school, Episcopal school, so I put in stuff for religious holidays, John Donne and all the—

DC: But I meant when you came here as a faculty member, did you find other people on the faculty that had similar political views?

SB: Yeah. A lot of them were dropouts like the others, like the ones from the theology school.

DC: Okay.

SB: And had gone to fairly conservative liberal arts colleges, but the English department was not conservative, because they were hitched to the *Sewanee Review*, which is the oldest literary magazine in the country.

DC: In the country, yeah.

SB: And our oldest constantly going, and it's still going. And I occasionally have one of my own poems in there, in the *Sewanee Review*. And that's going strong and it's a good review, especially good for a fairly conservative English people, but not that conservative, you know.

And a lot of them are Unitarians but a lot of them are Episcopalians, too. There are a lot of Episcopal priests who've dropped out, kind of, or become Unitarians or things like that, and a lot of Episcopal priests who are liberal Episcopal priests.

And one of our famous graduates here in the class of '69 is Gene Robinson, the first Episcopal priest who is bishop, who is a Unitarian—I mean, the first Episcopal—yeah, Episcopal. No, he's not a Unitarian. He didn't go Unitarian. He became Episcopalian. He was Church of God before he came to Sewanee.

DC: Okay.

SB: To an Episcopal school, which was supposed to be religious, you see. But he was Church of God and he was from the hills of Kentucky. Have you got his—?

DC: Yeah, I know who Gene Robinson is.

SB: Yeah, Gene Robinson, he's great. They won't invite him back for an honorary degree because they're Episcopal Church, because half the Episcopal priests would leave, you see.

DC: [Laughs] Yeah.

SB: [Laughs] But the other half would stay. They love Gene Robinson and they're trying to get him back. So, we students—we have a student, a faculty-student, a faculty—what is it called—Gay Straight Alliance here. We have about a couple of hundred gay students, I'd say, here, mostly women, because they finally let women in in 1969. And I was on the board of trustees and I fought that battle [laughs] a *long* time. And I fought the same battle I did bringing blacks in in the fifties. We fought to bring in women in the sixties. [Laughs] It took ten years in both cases to bring in first blacks and then women.

And our first black student, I mentioned in my curriculum vitae there, was a top honors student from Alabama who became a federal judge when he got out, the first black graduate from

the University of the South. And about the same time, the women came in. So, the women came in when the blacks came in. Well, the blacks came in, little by little, during the sixties. And the—let me get my chronology straight. And the blacks came in, little by little, during the *fifties*, one by one. And in the sixties, they reluctantly let them in, because the Episcopal Church suddenly desegregated, and a lot of churches moved out and a lot of priests moved out. And a lot of our alumni moved out, and a lot of our alumni were priests.

So, they wouldn't give an honorary degree [0:35:00] to our one gay bishop in the whole Anglican Church through the world, you know. And Gene Robinson came down a couple of times to speak to our Gay Straight Alliance meeting, and got the whole crowd there. [Laughs] And he gave a *terrific* speech, a knockout speech! And everybody came, [laughs] whether they were Episcopalians or not, you know. It was a wonderful occasion. He gave a marvelous speech.

And almost as notable, as we get onto your subject, which is when Martin Luther King came to Highlander. And that was after the unions had kicked us out. We had union representatives. We had union workers here for Highlander up until the Supreme Court decision of '54.

DC: If I could ask you to just back up just for a second and tell us a little bit about—just give us a little background on Highlander and how you became aware of it when you first came down here.

SB: Yeah, okay. Well, I had never heard of Highlander.

DC: Okay.

SB: I had worked for black rights in Evanston and in the Army all my life, and in my high school, and everyplace else. But—and followed the riots up North, horrified by them. Because I had been in Orangeburg and seen that segregation situation, but seen no blacks there.

And so, then I discovered that this little college, the first job I could get, for one semester after the war, or two semesters, actually, and then it was extended for lifetime, it turned out, because they liked my teaching even if they didn't like my politics. And so, I found my life's dedication, basically, to bring in blacks to the South and desegregate the South and to work with Highlander. So, I'm a member of the board ever since. I'm emeritus now on the board and I go to meetings every year.

DC: And Highlander was at that time, when you first got here, Highlander was located right nearby. Is that correct?

SB: Yeah. It was the union school, union organizing school of the South. And the best account of it in straight literature is pretty much the University of North Carolina's Septima Clark book on her role at Highlander and so forth, coming to Highlander. And then there are several books on Highlander. And the best book on the history of Highlander and how it was founded by the unions and with the unions, and to bring in labor unions and the social gospel, basically—it was all the way back to 1905 and this—see, Myles Horton was a farm boy, a—what do they call them? Not a caretaker—you know, a stakeholder—what do they call it?

DC: Stakeholder?

SB: Yeah, um-hmm, farm boy.

DC: Oh, sharecropper.

SB: Sharecropper! That's right. A sharecropper from eastern Tennessee. He was working for the YMCA in his little college down here. He was a smart boy, went to high school, went to college, to a little country college, and got a scholarship to the famous Anglican, I think, seminary in New York City. Field? Is that Field Seminary?

DC: Oh, yeah, yeah, Field Theological Seminary.

SB: Field Theological Seminary and studied under Niebuhr.

DC: Yep.

SB: And got to be good friends of, uh—

JB: David, maybe we should stop and get [39:18]

DC: Okay.

SB: Friend and disciple of Niebuhr and a student of Niebuhr and their Communist Episcopal priest there. It's Hardy or something like that. And also the famous educator, starts with an E, his name starts with E.

DC: There's Union Seminary there and Fosdick.

SB: At Union Seminary.

DC: Right.

SB: And Niebuhr is at Union.

DC: Yeah, yep.

SB: And then, behind the scenes, was—was it Evans? The famous educator.

DC: Okay. [0:40:00] I don't—I'm not sure.

SB: Yeah, he's the other radical Christian and educator. My mother studied under him, in any case, at the Evanston Nursery Academy. And, in any case, so those two educators, Reinhold Niebuhr and—was it Jonathan Edwards?

DC: Yeah, that sounds right.

SB: No, Jonathan Edwards is Scottish, so it's not him. It's the English one, or it's the American one. Anyway, he was one of the leading liberal theologians at that time, at Union, or near Union. He was connected to Union. And he was the radical educator, basically. And your outfit, the Movement, uh—

DC: Um-hmm, Student Interracial [41:05].

SB: Was very influenced by him.

DC: Yep, yeah.

SB: Evans was his name?

DC: It sounds right. I'll have to go back and look. I'm blanking on it, too.

SB: Yeah, yeah. I can't think of his name. It starts with E anyway. Well, so those were the two big influences on Myles, Myles Horton. And they told him to go to Chicago to Jane, uh, uh, Jane—

DC: Addams.

SB: Addams. [Laughs] Yeah, Jane Addams at Hull House in Chicago.

DC: Yep.

SB: And work with her. So, he lived with her for a while. And that gave him the idea to start his own Hull House down in his home state and in his home area in eastern Tennessee.

DC: Okay, so that's how—?

SB: Yeah, so he found out this liberal Memphis woman, educator in Memphis, at Memphis State at that time, had just retired. And she was a missionary up here, up in the mountains. She had a home up in the mountains at Monteagle. And her house was off Monteagle, in the country just outside of Monteagle. And so, she bought this big old farmhouse. And I have a picture of it, the photograph of it there, which must be in the Smithsonian, which was the original Highlander.

And actually, it wasn't called Highlander then. It was just a school for farm people during the Depression—well, before the Depression in the twenties—very poor, rural, one of the poorest counties in the country, Grundy County, next door to us, Franklin County—Grundy County. And

Tracy City is the main city there. And to this day, they don't—well, they have one black family in Grundy County. They have a pretty strong Klan in Grundy County and they have a—the beginnings of Highlander.

And that's where Myles got his idea for a folk school. Pretty much Myles modeled on the Danish folk schools, which were the model for your movement, your religious movement, political, religious folk schools in Denmark. And so, Reinhold Niebuhr sent Myles to Denmark to study those schools. He stayed there for years and went back there, back to Niebuhr, to Union, and then, Niebuhr sent him to Jane Addams at Hull House in Chicago. He put those all together, the Danish folk school movement and Hull House, to start the same kind of place in Grundy County, in a rural county, in a very rural county. The main crop was, of course, moonshine and liquor.

And the first nightclub in this area, where everyone went from Sewanee to get their pooch, you know, and where my doctor, when I was lying on my back getting shots in the hospital down in Sewanee Hospital, had grown up. And at age thirteen, he had been the bouncer for the first nightclub in Grundy County. [Laughter] He's a big guy, three hundred and fifty pounds! And he tells me this at three o'clock in the morning when they're giving me shots [laughter] and telling me stories about what it was like being a thirteen-year-old bouncer, because he wasn't under the law, you see. So, they hired a thirteen-year-old [0:45:00] to throw the bums out. And one of the bums he threw out turned out to be one of our football coaches, [laughter] a good guy, a very sweet, religious guy now, just retired.

And anyway, so we had great talks at three o'clock in the morning, [laughing] while he was giving me shots, you know, about Grundy County, how we weren't allowed—kicked out of Grundy County and so forth, because we had blacks. But Highlander chose to be right there in

the middle of this dry, moonshining, very poor county where they hated blacks and they lynched blacks and things like that.

And they had moonshine and Al Capone and company. And [clears throat] so, he would come down for mountain moonshine and all, best moonshine in the mountains down here, because they'd have plenty of time, you know, back in the woods here. Real thick woods, I mean, these woods go way down into Alabama, almost down to the Gulf Coast, these woods right across the street here. So, it's a wonderful place to grow up, you know, deer, panthers, bobcats, and so forth. And so, we love it here. [Laughs] And I grew up along Lake Michigan, you know, in the woods along Lake Michigan, nuts for me. I was a big birdwatcher and still am. [Laughs] And so, [clears throat] so this was heaven. This was the utopia. This was Shangri-La, basically, for us. A little college. Of course, beautiful women. All these girls wanted rich husbands, come to this little Episcopal school full of Episcopal priests, very religious, no blacks, and so forth, all Republican.

DC: [Laughs] Right.

SB: And so, I had my—

DC: And you've got this radical school.

SB: [Laughs] Yeah, French teacher.

DC: Yeah, the radical French teacher, and then, you've got Highlander.

SB: Yeah, and went to Ph.D. in French literature, and French literature is notoriously leftist, and I *love* that. I read these wonderful—Victor Hugo, you know, teaching against gun, teaching for gun control. It's a great poem on—against—gun control: "Get rid of those pistols." But "if you want to get the people on your side, give them a pistol." This was written in *1870.* I

put in the local paper. They won't even put it in the *New Yorker* yet. Victor Hugo is too radical for America today.

DC: [Laughs] From the nineteenth century.

SB: [Laughs] Nineteenth century.

DC: Would you like to take a break for a minute?

SB: Okay.

DC: And then, pick up again?

SB: Yeah, go back to the antiwar bit just a bit.

DC: Yeah.

SB: Because I had my war record cut out for me, too, because I joined the War Resisters League and they had an ROTC here. And so, during the small antiwar, Anti-Vietnam War Movement, among our best students, our Ph.D. students. And they turned pretty conservative—well, they're actually Anglican, but they're liberal Anglican, anyway—but they're still antiwar.

And Richard Tillinghast, you probably have run into him. He's taken a house down here now, lives down the street from us. And he was a good student at that time, went down to Highlander meetings with me, but then turned kind of conservative. He wrote for the *New Republic* for a while and now is a famous Southern poet. And he's joined forces with the agrarians, who are *not* on our side. [Laughs]

DC: [Laughs] Right [...]

[Recording stops and then resumes]

DC: Let's talk about Highlander during the Civil Rights Movement years.

SB: Okay, yeah.

DC: I know that you began your involvement, really, before—the early stage there.

SB: Well, yep.

DC: Maybe tell us a little bit about Highlander moving, for example.

SB: Okay.

DC: But I know that you were involved in a lot of the early workshops.

SB: That's right.

DC: A lot of the Civil Rights Movement activists whose names we recognize, others we don't, you came to know through Highlander.

SB: Um-hmm, sure. Yeah, the way I met up with these people, first, I'd been to a Highlander meeting with a group from, uh—gosh, which was the first meeting? The first meeting was with a group from NYC, no, not NYC, no—Chattanooga, the University of Chattanooga. They had a meeting over at Monteagle. Myles called a meeting with white people down from the University of Chattanooga, no, the University of Knoxville it was, the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, who were trying to integrate the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. Then, with that same meeting, a group of students from, um, Tulla—Tallahassee? [He may have meant Tuscaloosa.]

DC: Um-hmm.

SB: Yeah, with—who were trying to bring in white students into the black college. Brought those two groups together to see how each of them could integrate, white and black, and so forth. And they had a wonderful discussion, these kids. The kids ran the whole discussion themselves, how to do it, you know, how to get it through the administration and everything. And it was a beautiful visual lesson.

JB: [54:16]

SB: Yeah, use the woods or anything else, John. A visual lesson on how Highlander worked, how two groups, opposing factions, working out their problems together and how to do it. And it was fabulous. I thought this was the way to act, you know.

DC: Right.

SB: And Myles didn't interfere or anything. He just let them go, you know, and let them work out everything. Occasionally, he'd say something, as he did to Stokely Carmichael about, "You've got to do it yourself," you know. [Laughs]

DC: Yeah, so what—I want to ask about that in a second, but what was his style? What was Myles's style like, in terms of getting a discussion going? [0:55:00]

SB: Oh, boy!

DC: [Laughs]

SB: [Laughs] He'd get them into fights, for one thing. And he'd tease them or kid them or pointing out in subtle ways that they weren't going far enough, you know, and that kind of thing to urge them on. And he'd make some of them mad, too, and it wasn't always pleasant. I mean, he was a very funny guy. He'd tell jokes and things. And, of course, he was terrific when he was drunk, because he drank innumerable numbers of martinis, make a big pitcher of martinis and finish them by the end of the discussion. And [laughs] so, he was a wonderful talker. Studs Terkel thought he was the greatest raconteur that he'd ever run into, basically.

And [clears throat] so, he was fun. And when I was with him on these field sorties, where we had to fight the Klan and things like that, he was just wonderful. I mean, he had an answer to everything. He was always witty and kept things upbeat, you know, and kept the dialogue going the right way. And he was hard to live with and probably had fights with his various mistresses or wives or people and so forth. He was a mountain boy, really, a farm boy, you know, and a few

martinis got him going. But, boy, was he a storyteller! Studs Terkel thought he was the best storyteller he'd ever run into in his life. [Laughs] And so, it was a joy to travel with him, you know, and just hear him talk.

DC: Can you describe that meeting—this would have been, I guess, after the Greensboro sit-in, but before the meeting in Raleigh in Easter 1963?

SB: Oh, yeah, that was a wonderful meeting!

DC: This was a meeting at Highlander.

SB: At Highlander. And that's the one where the whole Greensboro bunch came and the Nashville bunch came together, you know, so the two worlds came together and made the same world, basically. And suddenly, they realized what they had to do, and then Myles just at the right moment said, "You know what? You guys got to do it yourself," just like that. And it hit them like a shock of lightening. They always thought, [sings] "It's black and white together," you know, and we'd all sing those songs and march together and all that.

And we *would* march together, you know, and it *was* black and white together. But when we marched in Chicago, marched down State Street in Chicago—three thousand of us, three thousand blacks and a few whites—the Chicago blacks, all the Chicago blacks, Mayor Daley's blacks, were lined up on the sides. And all—we blacks were from out of town. We were from Detroit, Philadelphia, you know, and California, San Francisco. And they cheered us and clapped us and everything, but they wouldn't join us.

DC: They didn't want—

SB: We were all saying, "Come join us! Come join us!" And—but they wouldn't join us. And when we got to—great park where Obama gave his acceptance speech in Chicago and all.

DC: Um-hmm, right. Yeah.

SB: I wanted to shout out—[laughs] I wasn't there, but I was watching it on television, "This is where we met ten years ago!"

DC: [Laughs] Yeah.

SB: [Laughs] You know, "Three thousand of us! And shouted Mayor Daley down." We wouldn't let him talk, you know. I wasn't a member of that, but the Chicago socialists got in on that one, and they were actually black. And—but in any case, that was the reception in Chicago after the Cicero Riots, you know. And the Chicagoans were pretty scared, afraid of Mayor Daley and afraid of their handouts from aldermen, you know—aldermen.

DC: Sure, sure.

SB: And the blacks were for us. And the whites couldn't understand why we were against the NAACP, because they thought the NAACP—blacks were all NAACPers, you know. Whites had no clue [laughs] what was really going on in that division, you know. But the NAACP was pretty straight, for one thing, and too straight for the socialists and not straight enough for others. And when I got a member of the board, briefly, at one of our national meetings with the NAACP, and I met with Roger [Roy] Wilkins and company, you know, I said—after the meeting, I said, "Why don't you recognize the SNCC and SCLC and the Southern organizations?" [1:00:00] And Roger [Roy] Wilkins said, "Well, we'll recognize them, we'll take what they have to give us, but we won't recognize them publicly. We'll do it privately," you see.

DC: Right.

SB: Because they were as thick as mud, you know, is the Washington hierarchy.

DC: Sure. So, let's talk about the—we'll come back to Highlander, but let's stay with the NAACP for a minute because I know that you were quite involved with a chapter.

SB: Yeah.

DC: Can you tell us about that?

SB: Yeah, that was very involved, because, of course, that chapter was written out of the newspapers. I mean, *Banner* would not publish anything about it. The *Cap Times* was different, *Chattanooga Times*, rather. The *Chattanooga Times*—was taking me back to Wisconsin—the *Chattanooga Times* would say, always preface Highlander by "the controversial Highlander," you see. They stayed in the middle, pretty much, but they reported our news, except the bad news. And *Banner* went to town with the bad news.

…[break]

DC: Speaking of which, so I know that you were involved with the NAACP. Was that in this area?

SB: Yeah.

DC: Can you tell us about that?

SB: Yeah, I started the chapter under the supervision of Septima Clark.

DC: Okay.

SB: And that was when she was working for Highlander. She was the educational director. And she was starting little NAACP chapters all over the South and often against the grain—I mean, the black establishment thought they were liberal until the NAACP organized there, until Highlander organized there.

DC: Right.

SP: Septima Clark. Septima Clark was the most sweet, persuasive, nice person, and I just love her. I think she is the goddess of the whole Movement, basically. And blacks don't give her credit for that. And you can tell by that account in there, and we can tell, account here, because

she desegregated our Sewanee Chapel and really threw us faculty members, the Sewanee faculty, and the faculty of the Episcopal Church and seminaries, and the Episcopal priests—a lot of priests have left the church because of this, you know. The Anglican Church is broken in half.

DC: So, what was the reaction when she came to church?

SB: Half—we had about—David Yates was tolerated. He was a little bit too fundamentalist, and they thought he was kind of a hick, you know. He was Chapel Hill, where everybody sent their kids after they went here, but still they thought of him as pretty fundamentalist. You know, he wouldn't support World War II and stuff like that. And so, after they—they politely—the usual full church congregation was there that December day when he said, "Turn those two ladies over. They would be welcome," you know. And so, they went down to the front seat. They didn't know what to do in an Episcopal church, when to stand and when to kneel and stuff like that. [Laughs]

DC: [Laughs] Right.

SB: However, they didn't dare look around, you know. They weren't going to sit in the back seat! And so, they walked right down front. And everybody politely stayed in their seat. And at the end of the service, half of the church got up and left. Never came back. And these were mountain people. These were village people. These were townspeople.

And when we gave our trials under the aegis of the NAACP, [clears throat] led by the two bravest guys [laughs] I've ever run into. Actually, Avon Williams was the brave one. He came down *every* week for the trial for two years. You can imagine that audience in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, you know, of all whites in the county, Franklin County court, on the bottom, all blacks in the small balcony.

DC: Balcony, yeah.

SB: You know, cheers! [Laughs]

DC: Yeah.

SB: And they're cheering *him* on. And he knew that everybody in the audience was carrying a gun. But the police that [1:08:55] were not going to have this happen here. We're not going to have a massacre in Franklin County take place this day. And it would have, if they hadn't been there, and they stopped it. And this was for two years! Every court hearing for two years, every week for two years.

DC: Can you just sort of start from the beginning and tell us what the court case was?

SB: The court case was that I—I believed that they were going to desegregate after the Supreme Court case. But everybody in the South was stalling, you know, and for one reason or another, getting their lawyers to find some reason, and, of course, the meeting of the South Carolina legislature and all that stuff, and their party, their Southern Party, or whatever they called it.

And by that time, the John Birch Society had gotten in the act, and they had gotten a lot of followers in the South and a lot of followers in South Carolina, particularly, and Tennessee, and they had marches in Tennessee. [1:10:00] And you probably saw *Nashville*, the movie *Nashville*, where it starts off with a John Birch meeting and all that. And the organizer for the southern, for this area, this particular area, was a student, a millionaire student at the college, at Sewanee College.

DC: Oh, really? Yeah.

SB: And, uh, what was his name? Another name I can't think of at the moment.

DC: But he was organizing the segregationists?

SB: Yeah, the John Birch Society. He was getting these rich students to join the John Birch Society. And a few of them did. And they had one John Birch Society meeting here in Sewanee, well, just outside of Sewanee at a cheap restaurant. And had that restaurant just so he could preach John Birch dogma to them, to the students when they came in for a beer, because that's the only place they could get beer. And so, he would go up to Highlander parking lot and take license plates of all the cars there and send them to the FBI.

And the FBI *wanted* them, because the FBI was investigating Highlander and they had a lot on [hiccups] Highlander. Spelled Myles Horton's name wrong, of course. And you can see their record over there, but it's all blacked out. It's over in our archives [hiccups], our archives. It's Freedom of Information. I have yet to go look up *my* record in the Freedom of Information Act. [Laughs]

DC: I'm sure it's quite interesting. [Laughs]

SB: Because, see, when we sat in at Tubby's, the only place we could get beer, where the students could go in and get beer, the blacks had to come in the back door and so forth, get beer. And some of them were janitors, and were known by these students, and they'd go back to talk to the black janitors, and they'd be kicked out for going back there, you know. And so, we got Avon Williams on that case, because Tubby's was a nationally registered drinking place, beer place, basically beer house. And so, we called in Avon, and he called in the FBI.

Well, the FBI sent two investigators down. And the investigators investigated not the guys, not Tubby's, but *us*, who started that movement, you see, got them down to Tubby's, started the sit-ins. And so, we were on their list for a long time. Matter of fact, we have a big record in the FBI, but I haven't bothered to go. [Laughs] It'd be dull anyway, probably pretty

blacked out anyhow. Because I've been here a long time. See, I've been here forty years, more than forty years, and so I must have some record there. [Laughs]

DC: I'm sure.

SB: And—but it's been fun, you know. It's been on the right side of the law, [laughs] for the first time, you know.

DC: Um-hmm, absolutely. You've seen a lot. So, that court—

SB: And be rigidly righteous, you know.

DC: Right. So, that court case was a desegregation—was it about desegregating the schools?

SB: Yeah.

DC: Yeah.

SB: We called Avon Williams and Looby, Looby & Williams, from Nashville. We went down to their office on the canal, or the river in Nashville, down in the slums kind of. And it was a fascinating trip, because Mrs. Fowler, our leader, went with us. And she was a black woman from Sewanee and she was another hero. She worked closely with Septima Clark. She should be written up, too. She ran the NAACP chapter starting with 1969, no, '67, with that meeting over at Highlander with Martin Luther King and so forth, and Rosa Parks. You've seen the photograph of that, of all of us?

DC: Um-hmm.

SB: I'm on the back, standing against the window. [Laughs]

DC: Right. This is the photograph that was used to sort of—

SB: Put on billboards all over.

DC: Yeah, to—

SB: All over the country!

DC: To paint Highlander as a Communist hotbed.

SB: Yeah. "King at Communist Folk School," it says, big photograph.

DC: Yeah.

SB: And you can see me standing against the wall. [Laughs]

DC: [Laughs]

SB: And then, my students used to come in with a picture and say, "Hey! Just saw you at Highlander the other day!" They wouldn't go to Highlander, of course. Nobody would go to Highlander. Nobody *to this day* goes to Highlander. A few brave people have houses there, because they're cheap, and they've driven the Highlander people out, and the lake is good fishing. And Highlander always permitted everybody to come and fish there. So, fishermen came in, period.

DC: What happened to the—so after Highlander got run out of town, what happened to the land itself?

SB: It's been sold cheap, [1:14:46] little houses, and waitresses at Monteagle and people like that. And the important—it's Summerville. It's a suburb of Monteagle, a little country suburb. Next time I'll take you when you come down, [1:15:00] because it's worth seeing to see the graves. And Septima Clark—not Septima Clark, but Mae Justice's grave. You know about Mae Justice, I guess.

DC: Um-hmm.

SB: And Mae Justice and the whole Horton family is buried there.

DC: Oh, okay.

SB: And so, I always take them there first. And we finally got them, just last year, to put up a highway marker there.

DC: Oh, good.

SB: About the history of Highlander, two sides. And so, it's about a mile on beyond—you can go there and just pass it, and in two minutes see it on your way out. It's a mile beyond Monteagle on the Jasper Road, the road to—actually the road, Tracy City Road. Go straight from Monteagle to Tracy City, and a little ways up, you'll see a marker, historical marker, on the left side of the road, one of those gray historical markers, with a sign up there. And you turn on that little road and then you take another turn, two turns, and you're at Highlander, or you're at the cemetery. And the cemetery is right across from Highlander. And the old Highlander is mainly bricks and mortar just from the fire that's left.

DC: Um-hmm.

SB: [Speaking to JB] You can use the woods or the john if you want to go to the—

JB: No, I was just closing the door. I didn't want [1:16:18].

SB: Oh, I'm sorry. And so, that's very accessible. If you have lunch at Monteagle, you can just zip off like that, you know, and go to Highlander and the cemetery and see what's left of the lake. And the lake is still good, and people still fish in it. And they come over there just to fish, not to build or anything, though they could get—buy the old library, which is a historical monument. And I got the historical monument people down from Washington to investigate it, but it's been too gentrified now. These little houses have been built around it. It's become a little suburb, really.

DC: Interesting.

SB: And what's left of Myles's beautiful house, which he built out of mountain stone himself, was burned down by the parish over there, the Presbyterians, the Cumberland Presbyterian parish, under instructions by its minister, who went to his grave begging pardon from God for doing that, urging his parish to burn it down, you know, and regretted it the rest of his life.

And so, that's worthy of a trip. But I get groups down from Alaska, from all over, even Europe.

DC: Who want to see it, yeah.

SB: To visit the place where, really *the* one spot where the whole Movement started, the active movement of it, where really the shit hit the fan, really, basically, there.

DC: Yeah. Well, let me ask you, then—this is a perfect segue, then, to sort of a big overview question that I was going to ask you, which is: Can you sort of give an assessment of Highlander's place in the Movement?

SB: Oh, God! Yeah! [Laughs] It's finally getting recognized! Nobody would even mention Highlander for *years* until just recently, until the last—until Obama got in there, basically. And suddenly, suddenly, it became history, American history, you know. And now, everybody talks about Highlander. [Laughs] It's kind of embarrassing. They all want to hear about Highlander. People wouldn't speak to me for years, you know, or thought I was wrecking the faculty.

Our dean, called the Red Dean, was from the, uh, from Virginia, East Coast, the Gulf Coast, not the Gulf Coast, the Atlantic Coast shore, the Virginia shore. Anyway, our Red Dean, he was one of our strictest, not only anti-gay but anti-black—and so, I fought him for twenty years, until he finally said, "I'm sorry to go against Dr. Bates for the first time in my life, but I'm

for getting rid of cars at Sewanee." [Laughs] Which he always had been! [1:19:11] all the time I'd been trying to get rid of cars at Sewanee—for years! That was a great thing to hear.

Good students and no cars, you know. And good classes, good teachers. And very strict adherence to the Old Guard, you know, *real* English teaching, *real* language teaching. Every English major had to take French, which was great for me [laughs], you know, because I could teach them all these seditious things in French.

DC: [Laughs] Yeah right.

SB: And have them read seditious French books. And they'd sneak out the *Marquis de Sade*, as a matter of fact, which we have in our library, out on reserve.

JB: Do you think French liberalism and French eroticism are somehow linked?

SB: Oh, very definitely. Everybody [1:20:00] in France knows French eroticism, and nobody in France is allowed to read it. And they have a safeguard committee in France that keeps erotic books out of the national libraries. But they're thick in other libraries. I mean, everybody knows these books and anybody can buy them in certain bookstores. You have to know which bookstores, you know, to go to.

JB: Like Victor Hugo and his un-radicalism—

SB: Yeah, well, his own radicalism was socialist, basically, and pretty much your socialism, Christian socialism. And that's why that poem against the gun sellers should be publicized across America now. And I've sent it to publishers. I've sent it to the *Nation*. I've sent it to the *New Republic*. And *they* won't publish it, you know.

DC: It's so strange.

SB: They're so much under the power of the gun lobby.

DC: Right. If only for historic interest, I mean, it's like how could you—?

SB: Well, geez!

DC: It's still seditious.

SB: Yeah! Yeah, somehow it's seditious. And mainly for one passage, which I have translated here. And you can read the first few lines of it, or I can read the first few lines if we're off-camera to you, because it should be known.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

SB: It's the answer to the Biblical right.

JB: You're on.

DC: You've got the microphone on.

SB: Oh, yeah, I'm sorry. Yeah, I could read it aloud, and then you wouldn't be published! We can deal with that, in any case, afterwards, because it's a wonderful passage, really. But everybody knows it in France. But nobody will publish it, you see, since the *Marquis de Sade.* Actually, it's since, not the *Marquis de Sade* so much. It's much more blasphemous than sadistic. It's from the *Anti-Justine*, not the *Justine* of Sade, but the *Anti-Justine* by Rétif de la Bretonne, which he wrote as an answer to Sade to write a pornographic book that was not sadistic. He thought he could. Well, he can't in this passage, [laughs] not quite.

DC: Yeah, yeah.

SB: But everybody knows it, anyway, but it's still banned in France. But it's published in France in the underground book series, the green-backed books, and things like that, you know, and especially at James Joyce, Incorporated… bookstore, you know, in Paris. If you want to read a great book—well, there are several great books about that.

JB: Well, you can give me a list [1:22:34].

SB: Yeah. I've got a lot of stuff that I've got. Most of my stuff, my office is at my cabin up there.

DC: Oh, okay.

SB: I can take you up there, because nobody is up there, and show you my library[...]

DC: [laughs] Yes, well, we have to see that. So, let me just ask a couple of more questions.

SB: Yeah, sure.

DC: As a way of wrapping up, I guess.

SB: Yeah.

DC: And just another—I want to ask you again about sort of Highlander's role. So, there's a sociologist named Aldon Morris, who wrote this book, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, as one of the first to sort of lay out the history.

SB: Yeah, I've heard of him. Well, he was the head of the group, the Episcopal group in Atlanta.

DC: Okay.

SB: John Morris? Is it John Morris?

DC: No, this is Aldon Morris.

SB: Aldon Morris.

DC: In Chicago, I believe.

SB: Oh, well, he may be related, because John Morris heads the Episcopal Society for Desegregation.

DC: Oh, okay.

SB: And so, he should be known by you guys.

DC: Oh, good.

SB: See, we had a blowup over, another blowup in the sixties about desegregating our inn, Sewanee Inn. I'm sorry, we're still on tape.

DC: No, well, I was just going to say Aldon Morris does write about Highlander. He was—actually very early on recognized Highlander.

SB: Yeah.

DC: But he called it—he said Highlander, he talked about Hull House, places like that he called "movement halfway houses." Basically, they were places that trained and inspired others and sent them on.

SB: That's right, very much so.

DC: Yeah.

SB: And that was basically the role of Highlander. And Hull House had a big influence on Myles. He went up to Hull House and visited.

DC: I didn't know that he had taken—so, he sort of took that lesson and brought it to Highlander.

SB: Yeah. He took—he started with, basically, with the Episcopal academy, or the New York academy, New York seminary.

DC: Right.

SB: That's where he went.

DC: Right.

SB: And then, he went from there to, well, and from Niebuhr, to Chicago. From Chicago to—gosh, I think [1:25:00] he went to—there, he went to—basically, they let him know about

Monteagle, the retired college professor at Monteagle and Highlander, because she backed Highlander.

DC: Right. And so, he started working with poor, you know, poor folks in this area.

SB: Yeah.

DC: And never really stopped, right? I mean, is that—Highlander is still kind of focused on working for the people from the people?

SB: That's right, very much so. And very upset that I pushed sometimes NAACP stuff at him.

DC: Oh, really?

SB: Yeah. Because he didn't want to work with them in a way. He didn't want anything official. He wanted to keep grass roots. He really, to this day, or to the end of his life, he was a—what do they call it? A new Christian? What do they—?

DC: Oh!

SB: Your movement.

DC: Yeah, yeah.

SB: The Christian left, the Jesus Christians.

DC: Why am I blanking on this one?

SB: [Laughs] It's your own movement! Social Gospel! Social Gospel!

JB: [1:26:08]

DC: Yeah.

SB: He was a Social Gospel person.

DC: Yeah.

SB: Yeah. And that's why he wouldn't trust these people. That's why he said, "You've got to go with the blacks."

DC: Yeah.

SB: But he didn't realize how conservative so many blacks were.

DC: Right. So, tell us again, because we were off-camera before—and we started talking about this before, but we're just coming back to it now—that meeting which preceded the Raleigh Shaw University meeting at which SNCC was officially founded, but this was a meeting at Highlander.

SB: At Highlander.

DC: And what Myles said to Stokely Carmichael was—

SB: After a big discussion, and one of our students, the poet I mentioned, Dick Tillinghast—he's now bought a house here and is a big famous poet now. He writes for *The Nation* and *New Republic* and so forth. Anyway, he had brought to that meeting—there were all these blacks, John Lewis and Stokely Carmichael and Barry, and so forth, there. He brought to that meeting, he said, "You guys don't know Thoreau?" They don't know who? Who's Thoreau? Well, he did an essay *On Civil Disobedience*. So, he dashed back to Sewanee, eight miles, got his book *On Civil Disobedience*, tore back to the meeting and introduced it around, so introduced that book, the essay *On Civil Disobedience.*

Now, that's when the Black Panthers started. That was the spark, basically. I don't know if that book had anything to do with it. [Laughs] I don't know if they even read that book. I doubt it, kind of. These Black Panthers were not into reading white books, you know. But anyway, they started the Black Panthers *right then*, that month, you know. And they marched—

DC: SNCC, you mean.

SB: Yeah, SNCC. And the March on—not on Montgomery, but on Ole Miss, you know, the courthouse door, and all that stuff. And so, that was the spark, really.

DC: Yeah, and can you just tell us again the quote, what Myles said?

SB: Myles said, "You know, you guys, you've got to do it yourselves. Whites will not stick with you." And he was right, too.

DC: Um-hmm, even though it would be about five or six years before that came true.

SB: Oh, yeah.

DC: But he saw that.

SB: Yeah, he saw it. And Stokely said, "That's it. That's right." And when they came down to Highlander—they did come down to Highlander, a group of Panthers from Chicago—they brought all their guns. And we had a sitting rule: no guns. I mean, they didn't realize how thick and fast guns were and how big the Klan was there. They'd already burned stuff down in Knoxville, you know, and stuff. So, we said, "No guns," you know. And we said, "Sorry, guys. We'd love to talk to you and talk with you, and we're on your side." But we just had to take guns. We'd be out of here in a minute. We'd be burned down in a minute, you know.

DC: Right, right.

SB: And that would have been the end. Because they were parading, the Klan was parading in front of our house up there, which was in the black district, the old black district, which they—what is their term for it—"urbanly-renewed," which meant moving that one house out. It was a big old whorehouse.

DC: Right. Is this in Knoxville you're talking about?

SB: Knoxville on the river.

DC: Yeah.

SB: On the river side, on that back road, across from the cement plant.

DC: Right.

SB: On the river, beautiful area. I could take the bus up to Gay Street in Knoxville and get off the bus, walk about six blocks down the river to Highlander, right there. And the Knoxville College, black college there, [1:30:00] kids would never come over, would not go near the place. But the black people, a few of the black people—it was right back of the black Presbyterian church up on top of the bluff there, right above us—would come down from their church.

And I and Esau Jenkins and Andrew Young would stay at that church, at the little black church on the end of the church. It was so much fun watching Esau Jenkins with his huge pot taking his—stripping naked, you know, [laughs] and strutting around nude, you know. And talking with us about Highlander and about—I loved to go down to Johns Island off Charleston, you know. And we took a busload of blacks over to—black kids from Johns Island over to see the famous rich island over there at Charleston, off the coast. You know, it's a white-only island.

DC: Oh, right.

SB: Of course, this was all white-only anyway. We took them to Charleston on a bus tour. But when we got off the bus, we were followed by groups of white kids, you know, saying, "Hey, that's a beautiful black gal there! Are you sleeping with her, buddy?" You know, and stuff like that, and razzing us. And, boy, they didn't want to mix it up with us. [Laughs] They were afraid of us, you know. They were afraid we'd take after them.

But they were jeering us, and Mrs. [1:31:24] was in the midst of us, was saying, "These whites, why don't they learn their manners, for God's sake?" You know. She was so polite [laughs] and nice about it. She was so used to it.

DC: Right, right.

SB: Not polite. What a reception for Southern boys, these nice black boys. And when we got to Sullivan's Island, the famous white Gold Coast there, we were met by two young men, white men, saying, "Sorry, this is off-limits, guys," to all of us. We were mostly black men, but some white women. Fannie Lou Hamer was there, and others. And Bayard Rustin, I think, was there. I can't remember. Guy Carawan was there. He was living down on Johns Island at that time.

DC: Oh, Guy Carawan?

SB: Yeah, Guy and Candie Carawan.

DC: Yeah.

SB: And their little boy, Evan. And [clears throat] in any case, so I stayed with them and I stayed with Esau, too, and that was nice. And then, one time Martin Luther King came to Charleston and he gave a lecture there, and it was closely guarded, and on the white side of Charleston in a big white—I guess it was a Baptist Church. I'm not quite sure. It was a black church. That's right, it was a black church. And it was closely guarded by the white police.

And when we had a meeting on the beach, we went to the black beach. The north part of Myrtle Beach is black, just a little section, where black houses were. And so, we did have a desegregated meeting there. And we were ringed by about, oh, I'd say, twelve or fifteen cop cars, the *whole meeting*. The meeting lasted all day. Went around and around and around. [Laughs] They must have been bored stiff. But we were talking, you know, and planning sit-ins and stuff like that, and they were going around and around us, you know, waiting for us to burn something down or raid something. [Laughs]

DC: [Laughs] Nothing exciting happened.

SB: [Laughs] Nothing exciting happened. But they were just keeping watch, you know, keeping their presence there.

DC: Right, right.

JB: Were you on the board of Highlander?

SB: Yeah, I got on the board in '58 and never got off. So, I'm emeritus now, but I go to homecoming and our—we have periodic board meetings and stuff.

DC: You were president of the board for a while?

SB: I was for a long time, all during the sixties.

DC: All during the sixties?

SB: Yeah, um-hmm, that's when I went down to Jackson and inspected things.

DC: So, how often did you get over there?

SB: Well, let's see, it's just eight miles down the road from here.

DC: Okay.

SB: And so, I would go once a week or twice a week, something like that.

DC: And how about when it relocated?

SB: When it relocated, it took me six hours to get up there and six hours to get back, and I was teaching five days a week, or six days a week. I taught six days a week, Saturday mornings, and we had required classes Saturday mornings. So, I didn't have much time off, because you had to read all the stuff and [laughs] those board meetings lasted a long time.

DC: [Laughs] Right.

SB: You know, with all the talking.

DC: Right.

SB: People used to talking, you sit around in a circle, from all parts of the South and West and places in—Chicago and New York, Boston, and so forth, and those folks had a lot to say.

DC: I was going to say Highlander meetings went on for a while.

SB: Yeah. And they were good meetings! Better meetings then—and when I got [1:35:00] off being head of the board, I insisted they stop typing them up and turning them into these reports. Because they'd send them in advance, people would say they read them, and they hadn't read them or hadn't had time to read them, hadn't gotten off their jobs in time, or hadn't read them thoroughly, and so forth. So, they'd bring up all kinds of stuff that normally, when we had oral board meetings, like this, they'd ask the questions right there, then, and they'd want the truth, and they'd get at the truth. And we who had just come back from a field meeting, you know, in Jackson, Mississippi, or I went to another one in Memphis and others, would have a lot to say, you know, that we wouldn't put in the reports, you know. The reports were dry and dusty compared with what we were talking about.

DC: Right.

SB: They could ask questions, you know.

DC: Yeah.

SB: And so, the board meetings have changed a great deal lately. They're good, because they're good people. These people are doing things and they're organizing things. And they're organizing gay action and the pipe action, too. And [1:36:08] gay blacks have worked with us, too, and that's been very interesting.

DC: I know this is a strong focus these days.

SB: Yeah, it's ridiculous, because it's the same damn movement. It's still a freedom movement, you know. [Laughs] And we still sing the same songs. And, oh, what's his name? The other emeritus, along with me, from Mississippi, who's head of the *Southern Echo* group. Anyway, he's a great singer and he always opens every meeting with a song. And he has great storytelling. Justin—[sighs] these used to leap out at me, after I've been living with them for fifty years.

But in any case, it's been a wonderful board. And the bunch down from New York and Boston and so forth are really good. They stick to business and they do the business. And a lot of the blacks in the South do the business, too. A lot of blacks from North Carolina and Atlanta and some—

[Recording ends at 1:37:16]

END OF INTERVIEW